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When I took on co-editorship of *Oxford Magazine* I had regular meetings with key administrative colleagues in Wellington Square where we would discuss, in confidence, the workings of the University – this helped the editors in our attempts in the *Magazine* to represent mood and policy across the University at the time. That was two decades ago: now my email requests for such interchanges often go unanswered and from this I conclude that the role and place of the *Magazine* in the University's communications landscape is no longer fully appreciated.

But the recent experience of a senior academic colleague – reported to me in confidence – is even more concerning. An email request to the appropriately-senior, responsible University official for clarification on an important area in the University Regulations initially went unanswered. Repeated follow-up requests led to an apology and a referral to a succession of more junior administrative staff. Four months later, no answer to the initial query has as yet been forthcoming.

* * *

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a university as: “the whole body of teachers and students pursuing, at a particular place, the higher branches of learning.” As the etymology indicates, it is the unity of the diverse academic interests pursued and the combined endeavours of those involved that is the defining essence. However, society's expectations and requirements of universities have gradually and fundamentally eroded this ideal. Now the list of roles and obligations for a university like Oxford is long and multifarious: for example, leading universities are now expected to produce world-lead-

Positioning *Oxford Magazine*

ing research with commercial and national economic benefit through spin-offs and patents; to bolster local and regional economies and planning through shared enterprises (often as major local employers); to host museums, archives and libraries for public benefit; to act as tourist attractions and guardians of historic buildings; to supply publishers with academic as well as educational material generally.

Less obviously they promote ‘soft power’ through their international students, serve as sources of expert opinion to government and the media, and lead in changing society-wide attitudes and values by way of student activism that feeds through into succeeding generations. Although British universities are nominally self-governing, independent institutions and largely self-financing they are increasingly constrained by regulation; e.g. through the REF, the TEF and Office for Students or ministerial mandates.

Against this background Oxford has been notably successful – constantly referenced in the news on the one hand and, on the other, providing many tangible outcomes for society, e.g. from prime ministers to pivotal roles in the origins of penicillin, lithium batteries, MRI scanning, gene sequencing technology and vaccines for Covid or malaria. Expansion of staff numbers was the inevitable correlate of modern developments. Like a civil service the academic-related, administrative and support staff – now significantly outnumbering academic staff (see *Reminders*) – provide the necessary and often taken-for-granted infrastructure which makes the whole multi-billion pound operation possible today.

It would not be surprising if the University infrastructure was poorly understood by the average academic. The job description for academics is to teach

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...and much more

and to research; these are complementary roles requiring different skills, imposing demands which can come into conflict. Academics tend to see administrative requirements – endless form-filling, compulsory training courses, attending committees, responding to questionnaires – as an unwelcome third, onerous part of the job, which takes a toll on their already pressurized working lives. An increasingly remote Wellington Square can be seen as having an all-powerful control of policy, finances and information, which skews academic priorities. Knowledge is power! University websites are increasingly complex to navigate – it's often easier to use Google – and frustratingly limited in content. (Don't bother to search the Council minutes published on the web if you want to find out how major policy decisions are being made – they are so brief and constrained by "confidentiality" that principles of transparency lose any meaning) Academics can feel disengaged from the system and may well, for example, be reluctant to stand for election to central University committees.

Within colleges, where administrative staff are proportionately fewer, collective and informed decision-making seems to work effectively and academics on governing bodies gain experience in the governance, finance and regulatory processes for which they are responsible. But, paradoxically, at the level of the now vastly complex University, there is the risk of the separation of two cultures – rather than between humanities and sciences – between academics and administrators, each with its own technical expertise, priorities, practices, and even values. How, in particular, can and does Wellington Square gauge concerns specific to academics? Staff experience surveys and the *University Bulletin* are designed to encompass all sections of staff equivalently; away-days, staff conferences, consultations and focus groups only represent the views of those responding or actively participating; the important open Q&A presentations by the Vice-Chancellor are scattergun in coverage. The ideal democratic option of seeking a consensus on significant policy issues through Discussion meetings of Congregation has lost favour. Congregation is moribund and now merely a last resort.

The one thing that successful academics need to be is independent-minded, a quality fundamental to creativity and originality. The administrative requirements nowadays experienced by university employees increasingly undermine autonomy: any imbalance of power – real or imagined – between the centre and departments would end up diminishing a sense of personal responsibility and can – given the abolition of security of tenure – make individuals wary of speaking out.

We talk loosely of free speech, which in today's world extends to the excesses of the social media. But in the context of a university we still abide by academic con-

ventions of robust but civilised, considered and respectful modes of discourse, without fear of comeback. Free speech in a university depends on an underlying expectation that those in positions of power are identifiable, accessible and accountable so that staff – at all levels – with differing areas of expertise or knowledge can seek out explanations and justifications, in confidence if necessary. In earlier times the Chair of the much lamented General Board held open Saturday morning surgeries in his Wellington Square office with precisely these ideals in mind.

* * *

Oxford Magazine defines its role as "a forum for the free expression of opinion within the University." It has provided a continuous chronicle and commentary on University matters for well over a century. It is overseen by a Management Board, which reports annually to the Proctors and appoints the editors. The editors are supported in deciding coverage by an Advisory Group of Congregation members. Ex-Chancellor Chris Patten has authored articles, as have past Vice-Chancellors as well as many students. (Given our shared interests we often cover developments in the other place) In 2007 we published a contribution by the late President Carter. For the most part we simply publish what readers themselves choose to send us, but more recently we have additionally sought to provide background information on University policies of general interest, e.g., through interviews with leading University figures.

Being confined to a University readership the pages of *Oxford Magazine* are open to everybody in the University as an in-house channel for open discussion, analysis and the floating of new ideas. It is a facility which is arguably increasingly important as, perforce, it becomes more challenging for University leaders to explain and account for the complexity of current policies. As befits a university which has so many distinctive characteristics, the *Magazine* is – as far as we know – unique in nature and without comparators among universities worldwide. In the past it has played a part, to take one example, in decisive debates on governance reform, allowing all parties – bridging both academics and administrators – to present and record their positions in detail in a civilised manner over a sustained period. But perhaps even more important than its content is its very existence as a symbol. Whenever called to account for its track record in promoting free speech the University can point to the *Magazine*.

T.J.H



Reminders



The most recently reported data on University staff numbers – by category – College-employed staff are, of course, not included – ed

Table 1: Headcount by staff group and grade group (staff in post as at 31 July 2022 & 2023 compared)

Staff Group	Grade Group	Headcount		Change		% Change in Headcount	
		2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
Academic	Academic	2,035	2,084	79	49	4.0%	2.4%
Teaching & Research Support	Academic-related	1,301	1,399	88	98	7.3%	7.5%
Professional, Administrative & Clerical	Research			-1	0	-100.0%	
	Support Staff	1,386	1,398	-11	12	-0.8%	0.9%
	Support Staff	220	215	-5	-5	-2.2%	-2.3%
	Support Staff	92	85	-4	-7	-4.2%	-7.6%
	Support Staff	314	323	-11	9	-3.4%	2.9%
	Support Staff	197	218	16	21	8.8%	10.7%
	Support Staff	467	447	-14	-20	-2.9%	-4.3%
	Support Staff	722	691	32	-31	4.6%	-4.3%

Comparing decision-making in Oxford and Cambridge

G.R.EVANS

Oxford and Cambridge exercise democracy very differently. In Oxford a 'Resolution' is put to Congregation, its decision-making governing body of more than 5,000, for approval. In Cambridge a 'Grace' is similarly submitted to its counterpart, Regent House of more than 7,000.

Oxford provides individual members of its Congregation with a means of raising concerns by asking a Question, a recourse which is not available to Cambridge's Regent House.¹ A Question 'relating to any matter concerning the policy or the administration of the University' may be asked by any of its members at a meeting of Congregation. Congregation gets to consider such a Question when a written notice signed by the questioner and one other member of Congregation is sent to the Reg-

istrar eighteen days before it is to be asked, giving time for it to be published in the *Gazette*, along with an added Reply from the Council.² At the live meeting of Congregation where a Question is formally asked no debate on the Reply is allowed but 'at the chair's discretion, supplementary questions may be asked to elucidate it'.

Questions are asked only when there is controversy. In October 2017, for example, there was a Question calling for more information about the outcome of certain internal Appeals on forced retirement under the University's EJRA.³ Such Appeals require the appointment of a senior member of the judiciary and the resulting judgments have been held to carry some weight in future appeals, though that remains undecided.⁴ More recently signifi-

cant concerns were expressed about what conduct might be permissible on University property during student encampments and protests including forcible intrusion into the University Offices in the summer of 2024. The police had been called. At a meeting of Congregation on 25 June the Registrar read out ‘the University’s’ comments on the handling of the protests from the point of view of the protection of security, stressing that security was overseen by an academic Security Committee.⁵ On 27 June an Open Letter giving the University’s Response was sent to all the students in the encampments.⁶

Cambridge’s Regent House cannot ask such Questions but like Oxford it allows ‘Topics’ to be raised by members of their governing bodies. Oxford’s are ‘Topics for Discussion’, put forward by twenty or more members of Congregation.⁷ In Oxford these are rare. A Supplement to the *Gazette* of 26 November, 2014 records one on ‘Possible changes to Statute XII’, potentially affecting the dismissal of academic staff, with its EJRA as heated a matter as that of Cambridge.⁸ In March 2018 a Discussion took place on ‘changes to the USS pension scheme and the background to the current dispute’.⁹

In Cambridge Discussions take place frequently, usually several times on Tuesdays in Term, though chiefly on the *Reports* regularly published by the Council and General Board on matters requiring the consent of the Regent House. For example in the academic year 2023–4 such Discussions were held on the ‘forced retirement’ of University Officers under Cambridge’s EJRA; a proposal to add a sixth Pro-Vice-Chancellor and funding of MRC Units. Such a Discussion is triggered by ten members of the Regent House who ‘submit a request on paper, or by email from addresses within the cam.ac.uk domain, to the Registry that a topic of concern to the University should be brought forward for discussion’. The Registry ‘shall report the request to the Council, and shall include the topic among the matters for consideration at an early Discussion’.¹⁰

The formalities of an Oxford debate on a Resolution are adversarial, with would-be speakers encouraged to send in advance an indication of their intention to speak and on which side of the question, with speeches often limited to four or five minutes or less for a particular occasion. Only members of Congregation may speak, with the possible addition of a student by special permission. During the debate the presiding Vice-Chancellor calls speakers by name, on alternate ‘sides’ as far as possible.

Several Resolutions were before Congregation on 25 June in addition to the one arising from the student protests. That took the form of a Resolution on Statute XI and proposed amendments affecting student discipline. With the implications still to be fully considered, that was adjourned. Further Resolutions were to be voted on, not by a live vote with the voters counted through by the Proctors as in a Commons debate, but by the members of Congregation present in person in the Sheldonian for the debate handing in a ballot paper. Any member who left before the vote would not have a vote counted. Members of Congregation were not permitted to leave a completed voting paper with another member or to hand in anyone else’s voting paper.

In March 2020 Congregation had passed a Resolution abolishing the graduate application fee in the hope that that would ‘improve access for underrepresented and socio-economically disadvantaged students’. A Resolu-

tion considered on 25 June 2024 proposed ‘retaining the application fee and using its income to fund and expand graduate access initiatives’.¹¹ In the debate a series of speakers (limited to two and a half minutes each) explored the implications of the evidence which had emerged since 2020.¹²

Another Resolution was triggered by a proposal to make redundant a member of the academic staff who was a Fellow of St. Cross. St. Cross is not strictly a College but a Department of the University.¹³ Its academic staff are therefore subject to the University’s Statute XII and the Visitation Board which must consider any case ‘where there is a reasonable prospect that the determination of the complaint will or may involve an issue of academic freedom’ (s.26).¹⁴

This was seen as a test case. Congregation’s role was to decide whether a Redundancy Panel should be formed ‘in accordance with the provisions set out in Statute XII, Part B’. That roused strong feelings because of the fear that it threatened to set a precedent if a redundancy panel was established for the potential dismissal of an academic. The debate was organised adversarially in the usual way, with named speakers (four minutes each) and seconders (three minutes each) proposing and opposing the Resolution, and eight more ‘pre-arranged’ speeches, four on each side (allowed two and a half minutes each). The live vote was close and a postal vote was called for because of the importance of the issue.

In Cambridge the process leading to a Grace comes before its governing body much earlier. Recommendations preparatory to submitting a Grace are normally published for the Regent House at the end of an explanatory *Report* in the *University Reporter*. An opportunity for ‘Discussion’ on the next available Tuesday afternoon follows automatically, with all ‘remarks’ made at the Discussion published verbatim in the *Reporter*. Any member of the University may speak for up to fifteen minutes, and non-members of the University are allowed to speak (by special permission). Since ‘Covid’ Cambridge Discussions now take place at a Zoom meeting rather than in the Senate House. Intending speakers simply raise a hand to be called. Those unable to attend may send their remarks to the Proctors, who will read them into the record.

On 3 July 2024 Cambridge’s *Reporter* published ‘Remarks’ made in a Discussion which had taken place on 25 June on four *Reports*,¹⁵ and a Topic of Concern on ‘changes to the system of funding of those research units in the University sponsored by the Medical Research Council’. The latter issue had proved controversial because the proposal was to ‘end long-term funding of research units, in favour of creating temporary Centres of Research Excellence’. The ‘demolition of derelict buildings on the North West Cambridge Estate’ had to be put to the Regent House for approval as its Statute F,II,3 required: ‘Approval by Grace of the Regent House shall be required for the erection of a new University building or for the demolition or substantial alteration of an existing University building.’ There were no remarks on that issue although the expansion of the North West Cambridge Estate had been and remained controversial.

Among the other subjects for Discussion a *Report* on the ‘term of office’ of the University’s Chancellor was needed because Cambridge’s current Chancellor, Lord Sainsbury, had stated his intention to resign. He had been elected in 2011 but could have remained in office as long

as he chose. Oxford, also faced with an election for a new Chancellor on the resignation of Lord Patten (elected 2003) had taken the decision to limit the Chancellor's term of office to ten years in future.¹⁶ Should Cambridge do the same? Again a Grace would be needed and there was comment in the Discussion.

A *Report* 'recommending the budget and allocations from the Chest for 2024–25' needed a Grace too, under some clauses of Statute F,I,1. A *Report* of the General Board 'on the introduction of Clinical Academic (Teaching and Scholarship) offices and posts' required a Grace because the creation of Professorships in the University was regulated by Statute C, XI, 2, which required that 'Professorships are to be established in institutions under the supervision of the General Board either by Statute, or by Grace of the Regent House'. The *Report* of the General Board on the 'outcomes' of promotions on the existing 'academic career pathways' prompted a complaint that a promise to clarify the position for posts which depended on external funding for their continuance seemed to have been forgotten. That *Report* too needed a Grace to approve the proposed promotions.

The constitutions of both Universities enforce the supremacy of their governing bodies. They have to be asked for consent in many controversies and it is clear that they are not reluctant to engage on matters of sufficiently strong interest to their members. In Oxford a Resolution is often quietly approved without challenge after it is published in the *Gazette* but if it rouses opposition Congregation makes its opinion felt by live debate and vote. In Cambridge a ballot is easily called by a *non placet*, though there is no longer live debate in the Senate house. Nevertheless a ballot on the EJRA in 2024 attracted 3498 votes and fourteen fly-sheets and several options, finally approving the continuation of the EJRA for academic officers.¹⁷ A ballot on the proposal to limit the next Cambridge Chancellor to a ten-year term was held in July 2024, prompting only two flysheets and a vote in favour (1,411:338). A vote went more narrowly against the addition of a sixth Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Cambridge (618:555).¹⁸

What is to be said about the vitality of these historic democracies? Their energy when stirred speaks for itself. However such democratic mechanisms work only if they are used enough to maintain their force and credibility.

1. *Regulations of Congregation for the Conduct of Business in Congregation*, 5, <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/congregation-regulations-2-of-2002#collapse1396916>
2. <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/congregation-regulations-2-of-200>
3. *Gazette*, 19 October, 2017, https://gazette.web.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/gazette/documents/media/19_october_2017_-_no_5182_redacted.pdf
4. Part B of Statute XI and Statute XVII.
5. *Gazette*, 20 June 2024, https://gazette.web.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/gazette/documents/media/20_june_2024_-_no_5426_redacted.pdf
6. <https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/global-crises/university-response-israel-gaza-middle-east/open-letter-to-encampment-students>

7. *Regulations of Congregation for the Conduct of Business in Congregation*, 6, <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/congregation-regulations-2-of-2002#collapse1396916>
8. Supplement, *Gazette*, 26 November, 2014, and Statute A, XVII <https://gazette.web.ox.ac.uk/files/topicfordiscussion-possiblechangestostatutexii-1tono5078pdf>
9. *Gazette*, 22 March, 2018, gazette.web.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/gazette/documents/media/22_march_2018_-_no_5200_redacted.pdf
10. Conduct of Business, *Ordinances*, p.111.
11. https://gazette.web.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/gazette/documents/media/flysheet_1_graduate_application_fee_20_june_2024.pdf
12. *Gazette* 4 July, Supplement.
13. *Oxford Gazette*, 4 July 2024, https://gazette.web.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/gazette/documents/media/4_july_2024_-_no_5428_redacted.pdf
14. *Education Reform Act* 1988 s.202 (2)(a) required the then University Commissioners:
'to ensure that academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions.'
15. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2023-24/weekly/6748/section8.shtml>
16. <https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/article/chancellor-changes-to-election-process>
17. *Reporter*, 24 July, 2024.
18. *Reporter*, 31 January 2024.

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The Election of the Chancellor

A.W.F. EDWARDS

Alice was studying on her mobile the report in the *Oxford Gazette* of the Chancellor's election. The Mad Hatter objected: "That is very rude at a tea party". As she was at the head of the table she took no notice.

The March Hare said "What happened at the election – what are the voting figures?". The Dormouse remained asleep.

"It's all very complicated", said Alice. "They use the Alternative Vote system. I don't know what that is, but I can tell you the results".

"Results?" squeaked the March Hare, "How many Chancellors do they want?"

"That is what I don't understand", answered Alice. "I thought the Alternative Vote was a method for Proportional Representation. I suppose they want a Chancellor whom everybody votes for, though some more than others".

The Hatter said "A sort of Proportional Chancellor?" The Dormouse took a deep breath and murmured "Pooh-Bah".

"Well", said Alice, "let's see how the system works. There were five candidates and four stages, one after the other". "That was so they could choose which count to accept" said the Mad Hatter. Alice ignored him and went on "In the first Hague secured 9,589 votes, Angiolini 6,296, Royall 3,599, Mandelson 2,940 and Grieve 2,484".

"So Hague won", said the Hare. "I would have voted for him because he's an H".

"So would I" said the Hatter, "but no, Hague hasn't won yet because he did not get a majority of all the votes". "But that's absurd", protested Alice. "He beat Angiolini the runner-up by a margin of 3 to 2, and each of the others by an even greater margin". The Hatter offered the explanation, "He did not beat all the other candidates added together".

The Dormouse, which seemed to be talking in its sleep, muttered: "You mean as if they were a single person like Pooh-Bah just as I said, but credited with the votes of all of them? I suppose that's why it's called a Transferable Vote system".

Alice interrupted. "I think the point of the first count is to find the worst candidate and eliminate him. That seems to be what happens". "Exactly so" said the Hatter.

Alice was not satisfied: "You mean they eliminate the candidate with the least votes but they don't elect the candidate with the most?" "That is so", replied the Hatter, "unless the winner has beaten all the Pooh-Bahs added together".

"It's not fair if the best candidate needs to have more votes than all the other candidates together to secure election yet the worst can be eliminated by just a one-vote difference", said the Dormouse, "The Alternative Vote method is suffering from an Internal Methodological Inconsistency". The Mad Hatter did not answer, Alice did not pursue the matter, and the Dormouse asked "What happened next?".

"They had another count, but using the second preferences of those who had voted for the losing candidate, which was Grieve. They transferred the votes of the 2,484 of those who had put him first, now using their second preferences" said Alice, "but you can see that 232 of them did not have any second preferences". Then she added as an afterthought: "Oh, and of course they removed the eliminated candidate from the lists of preferences for the remaining candidates altogether, closing up the resulting gaps, in which case any lower-order preferences were moved up".

The Dormouse was now fully awake: "But that makes them more important than they really are". The March Hare looked at the Mad Hatter and the Mad Hatter looked into his tea-cup.

Alice needed time to think about that point, so she read out the results of the second stage after the transfers: "Look, the order of the remaining candidates is unchanged, but the 'Pooh-Bah' candidates remain in a majority. Hague still leads Angiolini by 3 to 2, yet the process still grinds on. It really is very odd. It is now Mandelson who is eliminated". "And 521 votes were not transferred" said the Dormouse.

"Then came a third stage, and Royall was eliminated, but the order of the remaining three was still the same and the balance of Hague to Angiolini still 3 to 2, with 540 votes not transferable", calculated Alice.

"Now we come to the *denouement*" announced the March Hare proudly, "the fourth stage". Alice read out the result: "Hague 12,609, Angiolini 11,006, a majority of only 1,603, with 540 votes not transferred". She paused, and added "But we know Hague was preferred to Angiolini by a much bigger margin on first preferences, and surely that is what matters".

"Hear, hear", squeaked the Dormouse.

The Mad Hatter sat up straight in his chair and said importantly "But now he has an absolute majority". Alice said very quietly "That is inevitable in the Alternative Vote system and so is thus of no significance whatsoever".

The Hatter remained silent. Alice asked him, again *sotto voce*, "What would you have said if Angiolini had won by a single vote at the fourth stage?"

Author's note.

I think any voting process should involve the publication of the actual votes cast, by detail and number, but of course anonymously. In the Alternative Vote system these are the declared orders of preference of each voter. With five candidates there are 325 ways of registering preferences. The distribution of these 325 ways among the 24,908 voters of this example in declining order of frequency would be sufficient. The mean number of voters for each is about 77, but much more interesting would be the extremes. What, for example, was the commonest order of preferences, and how common? How many of the 325 orders were chosen? The computer should be asked to regurgitate this distribution so that the effect of the transfer system can be studied.

Straight thinking on polluting cars

NICK MOLDEN

The “polluter-pays principle” is a concept so intuitive, yet so rarely implemented. Since the Industrial Revolution, we have been depleting our natural capital – resources and environment – at a scale that is unsustainable. We have been digging up these finite natural resources and using them in a way that returns pollution to the environment at such a rapid rate as we have not been facing the true costs. The driver of a traditional motor car powered by petrol or diesel pays neither the full cost of creating the fuel source in the first place, nor the environmental damage resulting from emissions released from the fuel’s combustion. If only the polluter were to pay the true price of his actions – so the theory goes – the level of polluting consumption would be reduced to a more optimal level. Why does this so often not happen, and does the *Molden-Leach Conjecture* put forward in my new book with Professor Felix Leach, *Critical Mass*, provide a new opportunity to implement the polluter-pays principle for cars?

Oxford has a strong tradition of thinking on this topic, from my inspirational grounding by Peter Oppenheimer and Michael Bacharach at Christ Church, to the latest writings of Professor Dieter Helm at New College, all taking place in a city that is at the vanguard of traffic management policies – sometimes well-founded and sometimes distinctly dubious. Most importantly, *Critical Mass* arises from a common cause made with Professor Leach at Keble College, a specialist in mechanical engineering, and the ideal intellectual counterpart to my experience in real-world emissions testing through my company, Emissions Analytics.

The polluter-pays principle runs into an immediate problem, if you cannot define and measure the relevant pollutants, or ‘externalities.’ We might be confident that air quality problems are caused by nitrogen oxides, or that climate change results from carbon dioxide from exhaust pipes, but what happens if we are not measuring them correctly, or we only have a partial understanding of the problem? As it happens, we were not measuring nitrogen oxides accurately, and that became incarnated in the Dieselgate scandal of 2015. For electric vehicles, there are plenty of carbon dioxide emissions embedded in their manufacture, even as they have no tailpipes. If we apply the polluter-pays principle to only part of the problem or based on inaccurate metrics, the theory of second-best in welfare economics suggests we might even make the original problem worse. But if we include all pollutants, we may end up with an intractably complex tax system.

Resolving this dilemma was the inspiration for *Critical Mass*. Originally, the question was how to simplify the consumer choice problem: how do I choose the most environmentally friendly car? In fact: if you are only allowed to have one piece of information to select the greenest car, does one piece of information exist and, if so, what is it? We analysed evidence for dozens of vehicle pollutants, including from their manufacture and end-of-life disposal, not just from their use. The scope was wide to bring in not

just emissions but other externalities such as noise, safety and infrastructure impact. We correlated each of these emissions against a wide range of variables describing the vehicle specification and usage to see which had the closest relationship with each of the pollutants. Although we had a strong hunch that the answer was the vehicle’s empty mass, we were struck by how strong the relationship proved to be. In fact, of all regulated pollutants that remain a problem, 83% are strongly related to vehicle mass – the evidence to support this is set out in the book.

But the significance of the finding is that it makes the application of the polluter-pays principle to vehicle-related pollutants practical. We do not claim that mass is a perfect proxy for all pollutants, but it is good enough. Put another way, we are trading a small amount of accuracy for a radical simplification of the problem of defining the target pollutants. As the mass is actually correlated with the *rate* of creating emissions, if the mass is multiplied by the miles a car travels, you have a metric for the total pollution burden, and it is on this an efficient environmental tax should be based.

With simplicity comes another important benefit. The system would be hard to cheat. Vehicle mass is not only easy to understand, but easy and cheap to check. In contrast, for example, vehicle regulation since at least 1992, with the introduction of the Euro standards, has relied on complicated, expensive and specialist tailpipe checks. As a result, when manufacturers started manipulating their emissions to exploit the difference between laboratory tests and reality, almost no-one noticed. And the Dieselgate scandal continues to throw a long, distorting shadow over the motor industry and car buying.

The City of Oxford is a living example of inaccurately targeted incentives, in the form of the Zero Emission Zone. As the entry charge is targeted on the type of powertrain, it gives a disproportionate incentive to electric vehicles, even though they typically come with higher embedded and tyre emissions, and implications for vehicle safety and impact on road infrastructure. As a result, in Oxford, as with many other cities, we are seeing big, heavy cars, with all their downsides. Were the entry charge to be based on vehicle mass, it would incentivise smaller, lighter vehicles, which come with a lighter impact on the world. It is important to note that this would not lead to a return to air-polluting combustion vehicles, as all vehicles from about 2018 genuinely conform to tough tailpipe regulations, unlike their predecessors.

The mission for simplicity, diligently applying Occam’s razor, has an importance that goes beyond taxing emissions appropriately, and applying the polluter-pays principle. That is because many dubious practices hide in or arise out of complexity. We are living this right now. As emissions have been hard to define and measure, governments have resorted to picking winning technologies, and banning those out of favour – which we are seeing with electric vehicle mandates and internal combustion engine

bans. These choices are crude and suboptimal, most notably as many combustion engine vehicles have lower all-round pollution than heavier electric vehicles. But worse, such a dynamic sets up destructive loops of rent-seeking: market players profiting more by investing in influencing governments and regulations, rather than investing in making better products that consumers want.

At the start of 2025, the European car industry is exactly at this point. It has lobbied heavily to influence

vehicle laws, mandates and subsidies, and is rapidly losing market share because they are building vehicles that are poor value for consumers. And they are often big, heavy and, therefore, nowhere near as good for the environment as we are promised. We are, therefore, at the point of *Critical Mass*.

Nick Molden would welcome comments and questions on this concept, and can be contacted at nick@emissionsanalytics.com.

The editors invite and welcome contributions from all our readers.
The content of Oxford Magazine relies largely on what arrives spontaneously on the editors' desk and is usually published as received.

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Ben Bollig has stepped down as co-editor during his term as Assessor.

How to initiate Congregation actions

How to trigger a debate or discussion in Congregation

It is open to any 20 or more members of Congregation to propose a resolution or topic for discussion at a meeting of Congregation; requests must be made in writing to the Registrar not later than noon on the 22nd day before the relevant meeting. Any 2 or more members of Congregation can submit an amendment to, or announce an intention to vote against, a resolution or a legislative proposal (*i.e.* a proposal to amend the statutes). Notice must be given to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 8th day before the meeting.

Questions and replies

Any 2 or more members of Congregation may ask a question in Congregation about any matter concerning the policy or the administration of the University. Requests must be submitted to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 18th day before the Congregation meeting at which it is to be asked. The question and the reply (drafted by Council) will be published in *Gazette* in the week prior to the relevant meeting. The answer is also formally read out at the meeting. Supplementary questions are allowed.

Postal votes

Attendance at meetings of Congregation tends to be low. Postal voting can potentially allow opinion to be easily accessed more widely across Congregation membership. Congregation can trigger a postal vote after a debate (but not after a discussion or a question and reply where no vote is taken). 25 or more members of Congregation have to be present ("on the floor") at the relevant debate. The request must be made by 4pm on the 6th day after the debate, signed by 50 members of Congregation, in writing to the Registrar. Council can also decide to hold a postal ballot, by the same deadline.

Flysheets

To generate a flysheet for publication with the *Gazette*, the camera-ready copy (2 sides maximum) should be submitted with at least 10 signatures on an indemnity form (obtainable from the Registrar) by 10am on the Monday in the week in which publication is desired.

Regulations governing the conduct of business in Congregation can be found at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/529-122.shtml>

Items placed on the agenda for Congregation are published in the *Gazette*.

The Congregation website is at: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/governance/congregation.

Advice on Congregation procedures is available from the Council Secretariat on request (email: congregation.meeting@admin.ox.ac.uk).

Calls for Help

(December 2024)

i)
A Modern Monster

In high school, dear old Mrs. Skidmore taught
us *Beowulf*, including lines in our
long vanished language, sounds of strange, dark power,
which, although badly mispronounced, still caught

my ear and mind to stay, till finally I
left city desk and typewriter to do
years of new studies and at length grind through
my own translation, all to find out why

that grim and brutal poem, through slow years
of wars, uprisings, and elections, still
rings out like chain mail in our cybered ears.
The answer looms now. From his joyless lair
across dank moors, his teeth bared for the kill,
stalking, comes Grendel. *Beowulf*, help! – if you dare.

ii)
The Need of More Navalnys

He went foreknowingly homeward to death –
before home, almost, poison-scourged en route.
His cross was prison, each day a new nail,
chosen and suffered in his hope to save
Russians from Russians. May it be so, and may
some new Navalny, now, save us from us,
or manifold Navalnys, living still,
do so by word and act, by sacrifice,
speaking for us in shackled eloquence
in their name and all patriots' names, and God's.

iii)
Of Angels Bending Near the Earth
To Touch Their Harps of Gold

At ten, I thought they really touched their harps
onto the ground, to charge ethereal gold
with earthly pulses and to give us then
their own chords, full of heaven-help for us.
What I imagine now is that when they
are home again, they strum out all they learned
in their reconnaissance: much motion here,
the mini-imps jab-jabbing upward through
our surface tension like hell-sent cicadas
to scream our lynchings at us, our gulags,
enslavings, burnings at the stake, and wars,
and, done with those, the final horror, soon,
the sacrifice of love to mere know-how.
Come down again now, angels, take and give,
before we end God's – who knows, trillionth? – try
for some Earth not inventing its own death.

DONALD MACE WILLIAMS

Donald Mace Williams is a retired Texas newspaper writer and editor with
an academic specialty of Old English prosody. His iambic translation of
Beowulf was published in April, 2024.

Snow in Oxford

qanik falling snow
quanittak recently fallen snow
aputi snow on the ground
maujak soft snow on the ground
masak wet falling snow
matsaaq half-melted snow on the ground
aqil uqaaq drift of soft snow
sitilluqaq drift of hard snow
qirsuqaq re-frozen snow
kavirisirlaq snow rendered rough by rain and freezing
pulak crystalline snow on the ground
minguliq fine coat of powdered snow
natiruvaaq fine snow carried by the wind
piirturiniq thin coat of soft snow deposited on an object
qiqumaaq snow whose surface is frozen
katakartanaq hard crust of snow giving way under footsteps
aumannaq snow ready to melt, on the ground
aniu snow for making water
sirmiq melting snow used recently as cement for the snow-
house
illusaq snow which can be used for building a snowhouse
isiriartaq yellow or reddish falling snow
kinirtaq damp, compact snow
mannguq melting snow
qannialaaq light falling snow
qanniapaluk very light falling snow, in still air

SUBIR SARKAR

Author's note: I had wondered if it was an urban legend that 'Eskimos' have
multiple names for snow – until I happened to visit the Arktikum museum
in Rovaniemi (<https://arktikum.fi/>) – where I saw the above on a wall. A
Finnish friend says that the language is that of the Inuit people.

Subir Sarkar is Professor Emeritus of Theoretical Physics and an Oxford
resident for over 30 years. His comment to the Guardian on 'Faster than
light particles found, claim scientists' was turned into a found poem by Alisa
Holland (<https://verbatimpottery.com/2011/09/27/faster-than-the-speed-of-light/>).

REVIEWS

Shouting Neo-Liberalism



Gerbrand Tholen, *The Role of Neoliberalism in the Marketisation of Higher Education* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2024)

Many assert that the perceived adverse changes in HE over recent decades (commodification, commercialisation, corporatism: often put under the umbrella term of marketisation) are the result of neoliberalism – an ideological force that has allegedly perverted the idea and ideal of the University. This interesting book explores whether that is an over-simplification (and perhaps a glib and lazy one?). Indeed, a problem for bandying around the term or indeed accusation of ‘neoliberalism’ is that ‘there is no real consensus on what it means’.

Tholen sees the term neoliberalism as ‘one of the most overused concepts in the social sciences and within the popular domain’ – and ‘so much so that its heuristic power is severely diminished’ as it is used ‘to signify an evil or damaging force within the social, economic, or political domains’. And ‘marketisation in HE has been understood by many as, in essence, rooted in the neoliberal turn that has affected the whole planet’.

Yet, Tholen argues, in practice the State’s involvement in HE delivery is ‘not congruous with how a neoliberal state would act’ – and hence with reference to marketisation across HE ‘it is not obvious what and what is not driven by neoliberalisation’. Often ‘Governments have introduced pro-market policies using non-liberal aims’ – and anyway, in the UK at least, ‘a real market has never taken off in undergraduate provision’ (we have perhaps a quasi-market). The UK has for HE ‘a highly regulated marketplace instead of anything resembling a free or capitalist market’ as demanded by neoliberal ideology.

What is a better explanation for change in UK HE since the 1980s is how Government and policy-making came to see HE as hopefully being able to ‘drive economic growth through human capital formation and technological progress, as well as [being] an engine of social mobility’. Those private-benefit objectives for and assumed purposes of HE ‘have grown and overshadowed the other roles HE used to take within public discourse and policy circles’ (think the Robbins 1960s principles of HE producing public benefit by way of educated citizens and preserving culture). Hence Tholen states: ‘The dominance of an economic instrumental view of HE should be seen as a crucial condition under which

marketisation occurs’. And ‘the influence of neoliberalism’ is ‘never more than partial and contingent’.

After some four decades of such policy change undermining the ‘Humboldtian idealism’ for the idea of the University the result is that ‘worldwide’ we find that ‘academics protest against deteriorating working conditions associated with marketisation’ – yet, those countries which ‘have resisted marketisation are by no means free of trouble... [there] underfunding has also led to pressure on universities and academics’. The common problem is ‘the growing crisis of affordability’ – how the State can pay for mass HE compared to its generous funding in the 1960s Halcyon Days (when barely 10% of 18-years olds went to University relative to 45% or so now ‘going to Uni’).

Tholen several times cites Palfreyman & (the late Ted) Tapper (2014, OUP, *Reshaping the University: The Rise of the Regulated Market in Higher Education*) – although some mentions refer to a bod called ‘Palfrey!’). He notes that in attempting to address a ‘key question’ as to ‘why marketisation has proliferated in the last 30 years’ we argued ‘that it should be seen as a natural phenomenon primarily caused by political concerns about affordability for taxpayers’ – and hence ‘funding for HE has been deliberately shifted towards the users, namely, the students, who then effectively become the consumers of education... and the provision of HE would then need to be coordinated by [quasi-]markets’. Our stance was very different from most others who saw neoliberalism as ‘the culprit’.

Thus, to the three ‘Cs’ as above (commodification, commercialisation, corporatism) one can add ‘consumerism’ and ‘contractualisation’ – although in Farrington & Palfreyman, *The Law of Higher Education* (OUP, 2021, third edition) it is stressed that the university-student legal relationship has been seen in English Law countries as contractual since the late-C19 even if only much more recently has it very clearly come to be interpreted as a B2C (Business to Consumer) contract (noting the CMA guidance to universities on how the Consumer Rights Act 2015 impacts upon them).

Faced with the increasing cost to the taxpayer of enlarging HE provision and at a time of national economic difficulty Government began to challenge universities in terms of their efficiency in deploying taxpayer funding – hence the 1981 UGC cuts, the 1985 Jarratt Report on university (in) efficiency, the RAE of the late-80s. As student numbers doubled with massification and annual funding per student remained fixed, the ‘unit of resource’ halved by the late-90s – as also for other nations. Gov-

ernments globally faced two options, short of finding more taxpayer largesse for HE – let the universities remain underfunded and overcrowded or inject more funding via tuition fees. Government intervention in HE via distinctly non-neoliberal ways more recently includes the creation of the OfS, of the TEF, and of fee caps controls.

The English took the latter option and, despite political protest, fees initially of £1000 in 2000 became £3000 in 2005 and then £9000 by 2012 – now £9250 and due to exceed £9500 soon. But not moving the fee in line with inflation except for the very recent belated shift to £9500+ has meant that the UoFR has slipped back by 2024 to where it was in the late-90s! If neoliberal ideology had really been the dominant driver of HE policy-making over recent decades the fees would not have been capped within a quasi-market and we would have experienced a fees range across HE reflecting market-demand for the perceived brand-value of varying universities.

So, all praise to Tholen for exploring difficult conceptual (and indeed political) territory and for addressing the sloppy thinking that simply shouts ‘neoliberalism’ when seeking to interpret HE policy-making over recent decades. As ever, real life is far too complicated to be explained away with a one-word slogan.

DAVID PALFREYMAN

Tholen is Reader in Sociology at City, University of London

It's not all Greek



James Stevens Curl, *Classical Architecture: Language, Variety & Adaptability* (John Hudson Publishing, £40).



Bust of James Stevens Curl by Alexander Stoddart, Sculptor in Ordinary to His Majesty King Charles III in Scotland, photographed in the artist's studio. The standing figure is a study for one of the Genii created by Stoddart to grace the entrance-hall of The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, London, for which the architect was John Simpson. © Peter McCormack).

The 31 March 2024 Annual Financial Report for the Edinburgh Investment Trust featured a collage of buildings in the city, principally William Henry Playfair's (1790-1857) memorial to Dugald Stewart (1830-31) on Calton Hill. The plug reads 'Trust in a style to last through the ages.'



Well, it has lasted, since the design is based on the Choragic Monument to Lycrastes in Athens (circa 334 BC) and the image marginalizes the Gothic Scott Memorial and the Forth Bridge. In his monumental *Classical Architecture* James Curl

reproduces the Greek memorial which influenced James 'Athenian' Stuart's (1713-1788) Dark Lanthorn at Shugborough (1761-71), but does not mention the Edinburgh building. Still, he can't include everything, since the field is so dauntingly rich. Certainly he trusts the style, and places it at the very centre of centuries of architectural production.

The broad context is that the prolonged expertise of classical architecture stands as an indictment of the jejune con of Modernist Architecture. This is a drum which Curl has been beating very loudly for some time. He does not elaborate on the theme, but he is irritated that in the nineteenth century Ruskin's pro-Gothic campaign was so very influential, at the expense of the Classical tradition. There was some poetic justice that as an undergraduate at Christ Church Ruskin was punished by being housed in the neo-Palladian Peckwater Quad, 'vexed a little because I was not in an oriel widow looking out on Gothic chapel.' Instead the view was of George Clarke's magnificent Library (1772), and even Ruskin had to concede that it was 'bold, learned, well-proportioned, and variously didactic.'

Curl thinks on page 1 that Ruskin's dismissed 'geometrical fret ornament because the type was only found in crystals of bismuth... might make one question his thought processes.' Curl doesn't bother to go into detail about Ruskin's belief that 'the pestilent art of the Renaissance', including Palladio, was 'degradation' and 'a flood of folly and hypocrisy'. There was a hefty Battle of the Styles in the nineteenth century, between Classical and Gothic architecture.

In the other corner of the boxing ring from Classicism was Gothic, with Augustus Welby Pugin a major representative. He experienced a species of nightmare when he visited Decimus Burton's Fleetwood:

'I am sitting in a Grecian coffee room in the Grecian Hotel with a Grecian mahogany table close to a Grecian marble chimney piece, surmounted by a Grecian scroll pier glass, and to increase my horror the waiter has brought in breakfast on a Grecian sort of tray with a pat of butter stamped with the infernal Greek scroll. Not a pointed arch within miles. Everything new and everything beastly.'



The North Euston Hotel, Fleetwood (1841), where Augustus Welby Pugin suffered

Decimus Burton was less single-minded than Pugin, because he designed the neo-Gothic St Peter's in Fleetwood (1841). Pugin's son Edward Welby Pugin (1834-1875) designed the neo-Gothic St. Mary's in Fleetwood (1866-67). Curl quotes Ed-

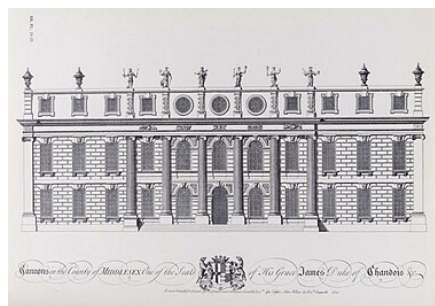
ward on p. 175 in connection with knowing one's styles.

Classical Architecture divides into two parts: the buildings of ancient times, and the various revivals from the early Renaissance onwards. A very full account is provided, with an admirable selection of illustrations and plans. The classical tradition has its accompanying terms, and Curl appends a 65-page admirable a to z glossary, with all kinds of words to mystify the layman who is invited to read the buildings: eg. abaciscus, acropodium, apophyge, astragal, bucranium, canephora, Diocletian window, entablature, gadroon, guilloche, isodorum, Lesbian cymatium, modillion, monopteron, mutule, opisthodomus, ouroboros (described by Yeats: 'there all the serpent tails are bit' ('There')), pancarpi, pediment, pendentive, propylaeum, quoin, riparine, rocaile, running dog (this might confuse Marxist readers), scabellum, scagliola, serliana window, Solomonian column, spandrel, stibadium, stylobate, tablinum, triglyph, vamure, vermiculation, Vitruvian scroll, vousoir (fancy name for keystone), Welsh groin (not what you think – nothing to do with Tom Jones), zopf und perücke, zophorus and zotheca. But how can he or she undertake the reading if architecturally illiterate? Still, the person in the street or the propylaeum often does have a sense of the attractiveness and magnificence of classical buildings, even if not *au fait* with their grammar. As a schoolboy I waited for the bus home opposite Birmingham Town Hall (1836-49) for eight years or so, and was impressed by its presence even though I wouldn't have passed an exam on the naming of parts, on what a metope was, which in this case the building didn't have, or a rusticated podium, which it did have. It has survived, but many haven't and have been thrown away as carelessly as a used Kleenex. The classic case is the destruction of the Adelphi Terrace in the 'thirties and more recently in 1961 of the Doric Euston Arch.

The classicism of the ancient world was not a monolithic entity, but capable of considerable variation, and it took architects in the post-Medieval world three or four centuries to be cognizant of it all, the final phase being the discovery of the Doric Greek Tradition. It's important to stress that one of the words in the title of Curl's book is 'variety'. In late Roman architecture, for instance, there was extensive innovation and modification, and the evolution, even, of a species of proto-Baroque. The expertise which gradually built up the complete picture was admirable, and attests to the commitment generation after generation exhibited to a valuation of the inheritance. Curl has amassed an impressive body of information, although the extensive bibliog-

raphy demonstrates that he has had many expert predecessors in the field.

Many readers will find Chapters 4 onwards particularly fascinating, because they chart the way in which architects from the Renaissance either followed classical precedent to the letter, or indulged themselves in virtuosic invention, but still within sight of the classical antecedents. Certain of the buildings just take one's breath away with their innovative brilliance – Borromini's Church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane in Rome for instance. It demonstrates that the continuity of the classical tradition is not merely of slavish imitation. And also that its course is not smooth and predictable. Neo-Palladianism in the eighteenth century, for instance, was a reaction against Mannerism and Baroque in which there was even a political underwriting. This was not so much a Battle of Styles as a Civil War of Styles. James Gibbs represented the baroque, as evidenced in the Radcliffe Camera, for instance, and Lord Chandos's Cannons, and architects such as Colen Campbell and William Kent represented Neo-Palladianism.

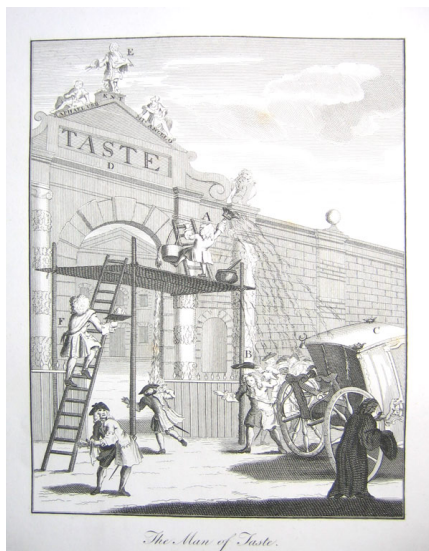


James Gibbs, *Cannons* (1713-24).
From Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus*

Hogarth, partly for personal reasons as much as aesthetic, sided with the Baroque-ians, especially in two satiric prints: *Masquerades and Operas* (1723) and *The Man of Taste* (1731).

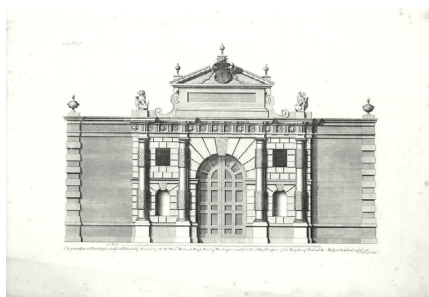


Hogarth, *Masques and Operas* (1723).
With the gateway to Burlington House
in the background



Hogarth, *The Man of Taste* (1731).
Gateway to Burlington House

These both illustrate Campbell's entrance gate to Burlington House in Piccadilly, designed by Campbell and featuring in his *Vitruvius Britannicus*. In both prints Kent is on the summit of the pediment, being admired by Raphael and Michelangelo, and in the latter Alexander Pope is whitewashing, with paint spewing over Lord Chandos's carriage. This arch led into a courtyard with two very elegant curved colonnades, which survived into the photograph age, but all were demolished in 1868, and we were left with what we have now – significantly less attractive. Burlington House itself had an extra story dumped on top of it.



The gateway for Burlington House
(*Vitruvius Britannicus*)



The Gateway for Burlington House.
Inside view, with James Gibbs's Colonnade

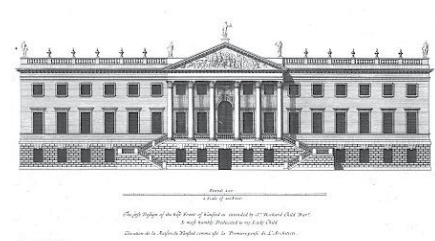


The courtyard of Burlington House before the replacement buildings by Robert Richardson Banks and Charles Barry Junior (1873), with the gateway on the right.



The destruction of the Gateway to Burlington House. Illustrated London News, 22 August 1868

Campbell's Palladian Wanstead (1722), alas, was demolished in 1823.



Wanstead. The original design by Colen Campbell.



Colen Campbell, Wanstead House
(demolished 1823) John Buckler

In its Elizabethan embodiment it was associated with Sir Philip Sidney who wrote a very beautiful poem about it, set to music by John Dowland. When I heard it on CD these lines sounded out:

'You woods, in whom dear lovers oft have talked,
How do you now a place of mourning prove?
Wanstead! my Mistress saith this is the doom.
Thou art love's child-bed, nursery, and tomb.
O sweet woods! the delight of solitariness!
O how much do I love your solitariness!'

And what about Cannons? It was possibly an original for Pope's famous depiction of Timon's Villa in his 5th Epistle to Lord Burlington:

*'But hark! the chiming clocks to dinner call;
A hundred footsteps scrape the marble hall;
The rich buffet well-colour'd serpents grace,
And gaping Tritons spew to wash your face.
Is this a dinner? this a genial room?
No, 'tis a temple, and a hecatomb.
A solemn sacrifice, perform'd in state,
You drink by measure, and to minutes eat.
So quick retires each flying course, you'd swear
Sancho's dread doctor and his wand were there.
Between each act the trembling salvers ring,
From soup to sweet wine, and God bless the King.
In plenty starving, tantaliz'd in state,
And complaisantly help'd to all I hate,
Treated, caress'd, and tir'd, I take my leave,
Sick of his civil pride from morn to eve;
I curse such lavish cost, and little skill,
And swear no day was ever pass'd so ill.'*

But it not's clear cut, because Gibbs designed Pope's villa, demolished in 1808, and memorised in Turner's elegiac painting. Pope assumes that 'laughing Ceres' will 'reassume the land' and, he was prophetically right, because Cannons was demolished in 1747. None of this is treated by Curl; but this is not to criticize him, just to indicate that cultural history is often very dense and detailed. Also there is not room even in a study this large to deal at length with buildings which never existed or have ceased to exist.

Buildings which have ceased to exist or never fuller existed or were wholly or partially destroyed, include Alberti's Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini (circa 1446-55).



Rimini. Tempio Malatestiano
(Alberti, circa 1446-55)

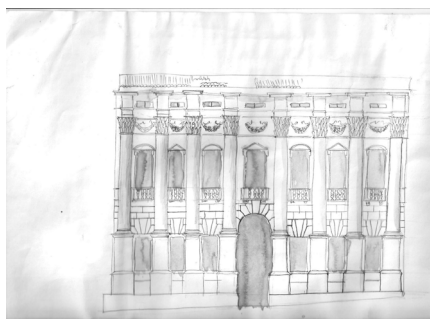


Medal for Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, with, obverse, the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini as it would have been if completed. Medal by Matteo di Andrea de'Pasti.

A partially finished building is the Palazzo Porto-Breganze in Vicenza (1571), which I envisioned in complete form in a lecture about forty years ago. Curl produces an illustration of this (p. 70), but not as atmospheric as mine.



Palazzo Porto, Vicenza (1571)
designed by Palladio, but unfinished.



Bernard Richards, Imagined completion of
Palladio's Palazzo Porto Breganze, Vicenza.

In addition there are many buildings which never saw the light of day, but only exist on the drawing board, such as Edwin Lutyens's Roman catholic cathedral in Liverpool. They got Paddy's Wigwam instead. Parisians were spared Napoleon's large palace opposite the Eiffel Tower for his son the King of Rome, designed by Pierre-François-Léonard Fontaine.

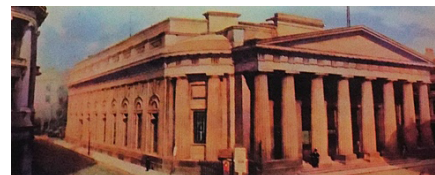


Proposed designed for the Palace for the
King of Rome in Paris by Pierre-François-
Léonard Fontaine.

They haven't all survived, but Paris used to be surrounded by classical pavilions for the barrières – when the city was, like many French towns, a sort of vast maximum-security open-air prison. Curl illustrates Ledoux's Barrière de la Villette (p. 130).

Classicism continued to evolve with stricter Neo-Classicism followed by the

Greek Revival, in turn outmoded by more elaborate Victorian Classicism, and then in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century a flirtation with Baroque took place, replaced in its turn by Stripped Classicism. A snapshot of the movements is provided when one considers the sequence of Manchester Exchange buildings, the Doric second incarnation followed by the third.



The Doric Second Manchester Exchange



Alexander William Mills and James Murgatroyd, The Third Manchester Royal Exchange – elaborate Classicism (1871-74).
Badly damaged in World War II.

Development of classical styles is always possible. Curl cites the example of American classicism adopting maize stalks for capitals (p. 131) – which shows that the classical architectural language was not written in stone, but hospitable to variety and innovation – within reason. Sometimes though the language goes so hay-wire that it is beyond reason and breaks the law, as with Arthur Jacob's upside-down Ionic capitals at the former Police Station in Chapel Street, Salford.



Arthur Jacob (1835-1895). Former Police Station, Chapel Street, Salford (1888). Not a criminal offence, but an architectural one.

Classicism really out on a limb is the Lutyens Delhi order, found in the Midland Bank, Manchester and our Campion Hall (alongside what are called *objets D'Arcy*). They were suppose to represent bells of quittance never to be heard – but soon afterwards we lost the Empire.



Edwin Lutyens. *The Delhi Order*. Midland Bank, Manchester (1933-35)

Oxonian readers will find a certain amount of interest in *Classical Architecture*, since Oxford has plenty of Classical buildings. We kick off with the Tower of five superimposed orders at the Bodleian Library (1620). Then there is the Baroque porch for St. Mary the Virgin, with its barley-sugar columns and broken segmented pediment (1637). Curl does not mention Wren's Sheldonian Theatre (1663-69) a curious curio, where the lower storey is pulled up to semi-circular windows even higher than Simon Cowell's trousers. Next to it is Hawksmoor's magnificent 'lion' the Clarendon Building (1711-15), 'full of gravitas' says Curl. Curl does not mention that my own college (Brasenose) missed an imposing High Street Front had Hawksmoor designed it (1720), or John Soane (1807) so we got Jacobethan instead. What we did get, though, was the chapel, where Gothic collides with Baroque in the most disconcerting way. The Gothic west window ought to have circular tracery, but it has an ellipse, and Curl informs us that elliptical forms were a key part of the Mannerist and Baroque aesthetic (pp.74-6). The neo-Palladian All Saints (1706-08) is now the Lincoln College Library).

The most spectacular ensemble in Oxford is Peckwater Quad (1705-14) and the Christ Church Library (1717-72). In addition there is James Wyatt's triumphal arch entrance from Oriel Square (1773-83). Queen's College demolished a set of Gothic buildings to erect a classical affair (1733-36). James Gibbs's Radcliffe Camera (1737-48) is better than the building we might have had had Hawksmoor's design been adopted. (See Howard Colvin's *Unbuilt Oxford* (1983)). Magdalen College has the very nice Meadow Building (1773). The Radcliffe Observatory (The Tower of the Winds) (1794) is by James Wyatt. It has classical precedent (p. 121) and a first cousin by James Stuart at Mount Stewart in Ireland.



The first cousin of our Tower of the Winds. By James 'Athenian' Stuart (c. 1782-86), Mount Stewart, Country Down, Ireland.

Charles Robert Cockerell's Ashmolean Museum (1841-45) is different, to say the least, from Thomas Wood's (?) Old Ashmolean (1683) now the History of Science Museum. One of the oddest things in Oxford is the window for the Codrington Library (1750), Gothic facing Radcliffe Square, but Palladian seen from inside. Two-faced. Up until 1893 Oxford had a nice classical Town Hall, but it was replaced with the OTT effort by Henry Thomas Hare.



Oxford Town Hall (Isaac Ware, 1751-52) Le Keux 1835

Coming to more modern times we have Raymond Erith's Mannerist Provost's Lodgings for Queen's College (1958-9) also his LMH building, and Herbert Baker's Rhodes House (1929), which is a dinner-jacket made of Harris tweed. Recently built is Robert Adam's Doric entrance to the Sackler Library in St. John Street (2001, but it has lost its name). Oxford is such a splendid museum of architecture that I always thought it a disgrace that you could not do a Degree in the subject.

Five miles south-west of Oxford is Sunningwell Church. The porch (circa 1550), with its mixture of Gothic and Classic, is about the same time as Palladio's Villa Rotonda and his Basilica in Vicenza. It just shows that culture does not march on a united front.



Bishop Jewel's porch. Sunningwell church

And then there is Cambridge. Wren's Trinity College Library (1676-84) is most impressive. The very famous prospect is King's College, with Gibbs's building (1724), an uncompromising horizontal slab next to the Perpendicular Chapel. An extremely elegant building is Gibbs's Senate House (1721-30). Downing College was designed by William Wilkins in neo-Grecian style (1807-20), and in our time additions in a similar style were made by Quinlan Terry (1990-94), including a lantern similar to our Tower of the Winds. There is George Basevi's Fitzwilliam Museum (1836-45).

It's really a subject for a complete separate study, and Curl does not deal with it at length, but in the nineteenth century classical architectural styles were available for railway buildings. The primitive strength of the Doric was inspirational, especially for Philip Hardwick's Euston Arch, and other buildings up and down the country, such as at Ashby de la Zouch Station and Lansdown Station in Cheltenham.



Ashby de la Zouch Railway Station. Robert Chaplin (?) (1849). But for the milk churns this could almost be a country house.



Samuel Whitfield Daukes (1811-1880), Lansdown Station, Cheltenham. Alas the fine Doric colonnade was demolished in 1961.

The grandeur of constructions such as the Pont du Gard was taken over when enormous viaducts were constructed, so that the dignity and strength of classical precedent underwrote the railway endeavour. The most magnificent railway station in Britain is possibly Huddersfield (John Rys, J.B. Pritchett senior and junior, 1847-50), reminiscent of Wentworth Woodhouse (Ralph Tunnicliffe (?) or William Thornton (?) and Henry Flitcroft, circa 1731-50). You need a camera with a very wide-angle lens to get the facades of these buildings in. Emanuel (I refuse to call him Manny) Shinwell in a fit of left-wing bloody-minded malice insisted on open-cast mining coming right up to the front door of the house.



Wentworth Woodhouse, the East Front (Henry Flitcroft, circa 1731-50).



Huddersfield Station (John Rys, J.B. Pritchett senior and junior, 1847-50)



Wentworth Woodhouse, the Baroque West Front, by Ralph Tunnicliffe or William Thornton. Open cast mining right next to the house in the 1940s.

Wentworth Woodhouse is a good example of the war of styles, since the Baroque West Front (by Ralph Tunnicliffe or possibly William Thornton) does not correspond with the later East Front, influenced by the neo-Palladian Wanstead. Monkswearmouth Station (1848) could almost be mistaken for a country house, as could many Victorian stations.



Monkswearmouth Railway Station (Thomas Moore) (1848)

When neo-Baroque was prevalent at the end of the century its influence was at hand for stations at Nottingham and Bury St Edmunds and the late example of the entrance for Waterloo. The most extraordinary Baroque station was Newmarket (1848) by Philip Hardwick or John Braithwaite, disgracefully demolished in 1970. This photograph shows it when being used as a hospital for wounded soldiers in World War I.



Philip Hardwick or John Braithwaite, Newmarket Station (1848, demolished 1970) With war-wounded soldiers during World War I

Classic railway stations seem like stage-sets demanding impressive drama. When Auden and Isherwood arrived at Penn Station in New York after crossing America in June 1938 they said 'We ought to be wearing togas.' Alas this was demolished in the early 'sixties, and I saw the sorry remnants. The architectural historian Vincent Scully observed, 'One entered the city like a god; one scuttles in now like a rat.' Daniel Burnham's Chicago Union Station (1925) survived, with its gigantic staircase, which featured in the film *The Untouchables* (1987) – a clever clever but heavy-handed *hommage* to Eisenstein's *Odessa Steps* sequence in *Battleship Potemkin*. This is the sampled world we are living in. Pshaw!



Left: a scene from The Untouchables filmed at Chicago's Union Station; right a scene showing the Odessa Steps from Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin (1925).

The magnificent Euston Station Great Hall was disgracefully demolished in 1961, at the same time as Philip Hardwick's (1792-1870) Doric Arch. Hardwick's Curzon Street Station in Birmingham (1838) has survived. Incidentally, why has Oxford never had a decent railway station, with a waiting room like the Divinity School or the Codrington Library, say?



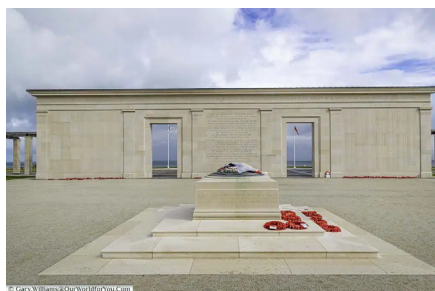
Euston Station: the Great Hall (Philip Charles Hardwick (1822-1892)) (1849, demolished 1961)



Curzon Street Railway Station, Birmingham (Philip Hardwick) (1838)

Modernism seems to have swept the board for much of the twentieth century, but in our time there have been interesting classical inspired buildings, and a certain number of architects are carrying the torch (or flambeau if you prefer) – such as Quinlan Terry. Curl recognizes that there is a problem: that Hitler's espousal of classicism puts a damper on it. Still, he

can't resist reminding us that Miës van der Rohe favoured the Führer (p. 153). Liam O'Connor's Doric Bomber Command Memorial at Hyde Park (2012) is regarded by Paul Goldberger as 'bombastic' (pun intended?), but his British Normandy Memorial (2021) adopts stripped classicism.



Stripped Classicism: Liam O'Connor Normandy Memorial (2021)

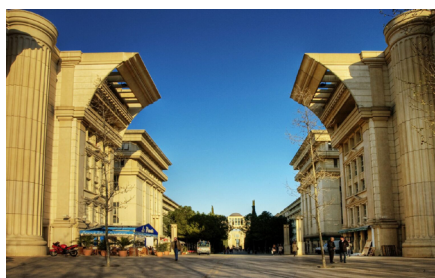
There are some very challenging exercises in the idiom, such as John Outram's United House at Swanley, Kent (1984-5), probably the oddest building in the book.



John Outram's United House at Swanley, Kent (1984-5) (Angelo Hornak)

It's rivalled by Charles Jencks's The Cosmic House, which rattles the pots and pans, and where the message is that if you can't 'stand the kitsch then you should get out of the kitchen' (p. 160).

The section on Post-Modernism feels a bit rushed; a whirlwind catalogue of names and buildings sweeps by and we need scores more illustrations. Ricardo Bofill Levi for instance; he appears on p. 159 in a sentence with six other names. His work deserves a picture; when a friend took me to see his Antigone development Montpellier in the 'eighties I just couldn't believe my eyes.



Ricardo Bofill Levi. The eye-popping Antigone Development, Montpellier (1979 onwards)

Curl is not really happy with some of the mucking about that goes on. Here is a comment on Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown's Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery (1987-91): 'there is no coherent form behind the façade: one is reminded of something applied, like wallpaper perhaps, that just runs out, and this façade does not hint at any architectural volumes behind it.' (p. 158) Nothing is safe these days; everything is deconstructed. There are many charming examples a world away from this, of which perhaps the best example is the polychrome image of Cosmas Damian Asam (1686-1739) looking down on us from the ceiling of St. George and Martin, Weltenburg (p. 83).



Cosmas Damian Asam at St. George and Martin, Weltenburg an der Danau, Bavaria. (J.S. Curl)

What is one to conclude from this great treasure-trove of precedent? Alas, the picture for the future seems to me bleak. Even if every developer were schooled in the orders and had the sensibility of a Quinlan Terry they could not be expected to produce in the classical tradition, because the functional demands of our modern society simply militate against it. How convincing would be a multi-story car-park with triglyphs, metopes, pediments, cartouches and what not? Or a block of flats? Or a power station? All that one can do, thinking of what our cities might be like, is despair, because they will never be built, and can't be built, even if we shattered the old, close to the heart's desire. What to do with the car seems to defy all optimism.

I saw the writing on the wall when at school. My first publication back in the dark ages was a letter to the *Birmingham Post* pointing out the absurdity of trying to marry the remnants of a classical vocabulary with the unlovely block of a multi-storey building: Tube Investment House at Five Ways – now the Marriott Hotel. At about the same time the gritty neo-Jacobean Victorian King Edward VI School opposite, where I took an 11-plus exam, was demolished. And the streets turned into a chaos of plunging convenience for traffic.

Yes, there is a lot of positivism and even excitement as one surveys the great sweep of architectural history. But it is worth remembering that depression was sometimes induced as one contemplated the ruins of Rome. Here is Clough's sceptical character Claude in *Amours de Voyage*:



The Marriott Hotel (formerly Tube Investment House) (1958-60). Five Ways, Birmingham

'Rome disappoints me much; I hardly as yet understand it, but Rubbishy seems the word that most exactly would suit it. All the foolish destructions, and all the sillier savings, All the incongruous things of past incompatible ages, Seem to be treasured up here to make fools of present and future. Would to Heaven the old Goths had made a cleaner sweep of it! Would to Heaven some new ones would come and destroy these Churches!'

He continues in his next letter:

'Rome disappoints me still; but I shrink and adapt myself to it. Somehow a tyrannous sense of a superincumbent oppression Still, wherever I go, accompanies ever, and makes me Feel like a tree (shall I say?) buried under a ruin of brickwork. Rome, believe me, my friend, is like its own Monte Testaceo, Merely a marvellous mass of broken and cast-away wine-pots. Ye gods! what do I want with this rubbish of ages departed, Things that Nature abhors, the experiments that she has failed in? What do I find in the Forum? An archway and two or three pillars. Well, but St. Peter's? Alas, Bernini has filled it with sculpture! No one can cavil, I grant, at the size of the great Coliseum. Doubtless the notion of grand and capacious and massive amusement, This the old Romans had; but tell me, is this an idea? Yet of solidity much, but of splendour little is extant: 'Brickwork I found thee, and marble I left thee!' their Emperor vaunted; 'Marble I thought thee, and brickwork I find thee!' the Tourist may answer.'

Of course, though, over the centuries generations of architects and patrons overcame such depression (if they experienced it) and seized on the fragments for inspiration. Which Curl guides us through so expertly. And finally – why no picture of John Nash's All Souls, Langham Place (1824)?

BERNARD RICHARDS

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